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While freight charges will doubtless limit the areas beyond which low grade fuel cannot be economically transported, the chain grate stoker of the Coxe type apparently opens one practical line of investigation for many water works superintendents.

CARLETON E. DAVIS.

COAL

There seems to be a considerable misunderstanding of what must be done by the managers of water works and other public utilities to obtain coal. All public utilities have been given a definite classification which gives them preference over many other consumers of fuel. This is a classification which gives a preference under war conditions; it does not mean a preference which will restore the conditions existing in times of peace. Nobody has the slightest justification for expecting that a preferential classification here will remove all troubles any more than our soldiers in Flanders and France had any reason for expecting sleeping cars and limousines to transport them through the enemy's lines. The coal operators are crowded to the utmost and the railways in many sections are congested. Under such conditions, inconvenience is bound to arise and the manager of the public utility who gets along best is he who sees what this inconvenience will be and provides against it.

There have been innumerable complaints from managers of utilities that coal was not delivered when it was desired but came at long intervals in large quantities which could not be stored. That condition is a war time burden which the manager must provide against. In congested districts coal can often be delivered only in large consignments, without interfering with essential war time shipments. The wise manager will provide storage somewhere for this coal; if he does not, a variety of harassing troubles are likely to visit him, and he will receive little sympathy from those who know how strained are the railroad facilities to meet the urgent demands upon them. It is impossible in many places to deliver a car or so of coal at regular intervals, without interfering with so many other necessary freight movements that national economy demands placing upon those heretofore served in this way the provision of increased storage facilities. This is their share of the war burden, so far as the coal situation is concerned.

There is a mistaken idea that the place to untangle complications over coal deliveries is Washington. It is a good plan to keep away from Washington in these days. The Fuel Administration is decentralizing its work so far as possible. A manager short of coal and unable to get help from the local fuel administration should deal with his State fuel administrator. The latter is an extremely busy man, working with a hastily organized force. There are two things which should not be demanded of him. One of these is how to furnish coal on a day's notice in a district where transportation is congested and coal is short. The other is to have such a complete filing system and such a well-organized clerical force that the coal business of a state can be looked after with the detail maintained in a local dealer's office.

In order to have enough coal on hand the manager of a utility must give the State Fuel Administrator ample notice of his needs, he should give full data in each letter so that previous correspondence must not be looked up in the office of the administrator, he should show how much he burned last year and the reason for asking an additional amount this season, and he should use every endeavor to take coal when he can get it and not when he wants it. He must put up with many inconveniences but they are nothing to the daily troubles of the fuel administrators who are trying to help him.

JOHN M. GOODELL.